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CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Letter dated 10 March 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit, enclosed herewith,* the letter of 10 March 2000, addressed by Mr. Branko Brankovic, Ambassador, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office in Geneva, to Mr. Abdelfattah Amor, Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance of the Commission on Human Rights. I would like to ask you to have it published as an official document of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 11 (e).

(Signed) Branko Brankovic

Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* The annex is reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

Geneva, 10 March 2000

Mr. Amor,

In accordance with the practice you have initiated and have been maintaining over the past years with the Government of the FR of Yugoslavia in your capacity as Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, I have the honor and pleasure to address you, on the basis of relevant resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights, in respect to problems in my country that fall within your direct mandate.

First of all, I would like to present some basic information about the situation in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. Eight months after the deployment of KFOR and UNMIK in Kosovo and Metohija, chaos and lawlessness are prevailing, terror is continuing unabated as well as international organized crime, illicit drugs and arms trafficking and money laundering; parallel, quasi state authorities are established, comprised exclusively of Albanians, as the only one of the numerous ethnic groups living in Kosovo and Metohija. Before the eyes of United Nations representatives, murders, abductions, rape, lootings, destruction of private and state property are under way on a daily basis, whereby one of the key provisions of the UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) to guarantee security to people and protect property (of Serbs primarily) is being violated.

In the period from 12 June 1999 until 6 February 2000, there were carried out in Kosovo and Metohija a total of 4249 terrorist acts, whose perpetrators are Albanians originating from the Province or from the Republic of Albania. Of these attacks, 4030 were perpetrated against Serbs and Montenegrins, as a population of other religion and language. As many as 834 persons went missing and were abducted, whereas 889 persons were killed and 784 wounded. Most of these persons are also Serbs and Montenegrins, although there are as well members of other ethnic groups. Over 50.000 houses were destroyed, and more than 1000 private dwellings and houses belonging to Serbs were broken into and forcibly taken occupancy of. Over 80 Serbian monasteries and churches were destroyed, including numerous historical monuments, libraries, archives and other material traces of the Serbian population in this part of its territory.

Mr. Abdelfattah AMOR
Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance
UN Commission on Human Rights

Terror and provocations are a daily occurrence. The situation is all the more serious that all these figures refer mostly to the remaining Serbs. Namely, more than 250.000 Serbs (in total 350.000 of all non-Albanian residents) were expelled or displaced from the Province since 12 June 1999.

My Government has on a number of occasions informed of this situation the United Nations, in particular the Security Council and the Secretary-General, as well as the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and others whose duty it was to react and put an end to serious breaches of human rights and freedoms of Serbs primarily, as well as of members of other ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija which have started with the return of Albanian refugees and with the deployment of KFOR and UNMIK in this part of the Yugoslav territory.

Clergy and monks are being physically maltreated, nuns are even being raped, whom members of KFOR and UNMIK, cannot and apparently do not want to protect from attacks of the hostile, nationalist and religiously fanatic Albanian population in Kosovo and Metohija. As a consequence, over 150 parish residences were destroyed, over 10.000 icons and sacred objects were robbed or destroyed, of which some are of important sacred and material value. According to our information, clergymen and monks are subjected to psychological pressure that even they can hardly bear.

I would like kindly to ask you to urgently collect information about the condition of religious buildings, of the situation of clergymen and monks of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo and Metohija, and of the entire remaining Serbian population of orthodox religion in the Province, as well as of other religions. I would like to stress that neither are spared in Kosovo and Metohija some Muslims (non-Albanians or Muslims having different political opinion and conviction), Romas, nor Christians of catholic religion (among whom Albanians-Catholics). As a consequence, a number of these persons moved out (ethnic Croatians) or are subjected to constant danger.

I am addressing you an urgent appeal that you establish the state of affairs and occurrences which are not in accordance with the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and recommend relevant solutions to the situation I had illustrated afore. Please find enclosed a part of information on targets of infuriated, criminal attacks by members of the Albanian national minority in the Province of Kosovo and Metohija and other criminals and looters who entered the territory of the FR of Yugoslavia from the Republic of Albania in the period following the deployment of KFOR and UNMIK.

I would like to stress that the Director-General of UNESCO was informed about some of these acts, taking into account that some of the damaged monasteries belong to the world cultural heritage.

We are also enclosing a map with Serbian marks in Kosovo and Metohija.

Destruction of churches, monasteries and cultural monuments:

About 80 churches, monasteries and other cultural monuments were burned down, demolished or seriously damaged, including the following: the Church of Notre Dame in Dolac, Monastery of St. Marc at Korisa from 1467, Monastery of Prophets Kosmo and Damien at Zociste from 14th century, the Church at Kijev from the 14th century, The Holy Trinity Monastery from the 14th century near Musutiste, the Devic Monastery built in 1440, the church of St. Paraskeva in Drenik from 16th century, the Church of St. Dimitri near Pec, the Orthodox churches at Grmovo near Vitina, the Church of St. Elias at Zegra near Gnjilane, the Church of Holy Mother in Musutiste from 1315, the Church of Prophets Elias at Bistrazin, the Church of Holy Apostles Peter and Paul at Suva Reka, the Monastery of St. Uros in Nerodimlje, the Monastery of Holy Archangel Gabriel from 14th century at Binac, the Church of Holy Mary from 16th century at Belo Polje, the Church of St. John the Baptist at Pecka Banja, churches in the villages Naklo, Vucitrn, Petrovac, Urosevac, in the villages Podgorce, Djurakovac, Krusevo, Osojane, Samodrezi, Dresni near Klina, Rekovac, Petric, the Monastery Dinac near Vitina, the cathedral of Holy Trinity at Djakovica.

Serbian and Montenegrin cultural monuments were demolished and destroyed, including the following:

- monuments in memory of prominent Serbian and Montenegrin men of letters Vuk Karadzic and Petar Petrovic Njegos in downtown Pristina;
- monuments in memory of Serbian king Uros in Urosevac and Serbian king Dusan in Prizren;
- memorial to holy Serbian Prince Lazar in Gnjilane and monument to Serbian rulers from the Nemanjic mediaeval dynasty in the village Gornje Nerodimlje.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Branko Brankovic
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.